

Inland Fisheries Ireland

Consultation Policy

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DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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Version Control Table

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IFI Public Consultation Policy

Policy Statement

It is the policy of IFI to consult with stakeholders and the general public on matters of inland fisheries policy and service delivery.

1 Why does IFI consult?

Consultation supports greater transparency, which is an important principle of good governance. It helps to ensure that the operations of IFI are conducted with greater clarity and openness. It recognises that public policy-making can be enhanced through the active involvement and contribution of all stakeholders with an interest in particular policy developments. By ensuring that stakeholders can express their views about a particular proposal, the decision-making process becomes better informed, more rigorous and more accountable.

There are a number of benefits to consultation:

- It assists the decision-making process by ensuring that interested parties can express their views on a policy.
- It helps to gather useful information to inform the evidence base for making regulations, including the identification of alternatives.
- It supports the rationale for a regulatory intervention or shows that the perceived need for that intervention is not confirmed by the facts.
- It helps to inform decisions on strategic planning or investment.
- It strengthens the focus of IFI on the needs of the public.
- It brings IFI closer to the citizen.
- It empowers individuals and communities to strengthen their role in society.
- It contributes to a shared understanding of issues and works towards agreed solutions.
- It can identify the likely pitfalls or possible unintended consequences of a proposal.

- Regulations are made to give effect to policies. Effective consultation helps to better frame regulations, promotes greater understanding of the proposals and better compliance with legislation. In addition, effective consultation guards against the possibility of involving only those who are most vocal or best-resourced to express views on particular policies or regulations. This can be important, for example, when it comes to ensuring that consumer interests are also taken into account when economic regulations or regulatory decisions are being made.
- The consultation process recognises that there may be a wide range of stakeholders on any particular issue, not just those with a direct financial or other interest. As well as the general public, other stakeholders may include consumer and business groups, trade unions, regional or local groups, the community and voluntary sector, the social partners and bodies with statutory functions in a particular sector.

2 IFI's consultation policy

Our approach to public consultation is underlined by the following:

2.1 The period for public consultation may vary depending on the issue but can extend to 6 months (best practice indicates a minimum of 6 weeks). During this time we endeavour to reach as many communities as possible through direct mailing; media; social media and through direct engagements (e.g. public meetings / stakeholder meetings / focus group work).

2.2 A consultation document will be published at the outset of a consultation process. This consultation document will set out the scope of the consultation and areas on which members of the public are being asked to express their views. In some cases, depending on the purpose and scope of the consultation, respondents will be asked to respond to specific headings / questions rather than offering broad scope for responses.

2.3 From time-to-time, in order to inform the consultation process, IFI may conduct and/or commission pre-consultation research. This information would be published / be made publicly available during the consultation process and may also be published as part of the [above mentioned] consultation document.

2.4 The methods for each consultation will be set out at the commencement of each process. Methods will vary, depending on the purpose and scope of the consultation, but they could include:

- Online surveys
- Professional polling
- Focus-groups / one-to-one interviews
- Town hall / public meetings
- Sectoral meetings
- Written submissions by email / post

2.5 Everyone who takes part in an IFI consultation will be notified of the final document emerging from the consultation process.

2.6 The names of respondents and their submissions will be published on IFI's website at the end of each consultation process (i.e. at the time the document arising from the consultation is published).

2.7 IFI is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 1997 and therefore has to consider any request made to it under that Act. IFI will provide advice as follows: 'If you consider that any part of your submission would be subject to any of the statutory exclusions under that Act please so indicate in your submission, specifying under which exemption you believe the content should be excluded'.

2.8 IFI will make every effort to comply fully with the [Data Protection \(Amendment\) Act 2003](#) and the [EU Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC](#).

2.9 While each consultation differs in terms of purpose and scope, IFI always endeavours to ensure that each process provides useful and meaningful information and that it is undertaken in a professional, transparent and cost-effective manner.

2.10 Consultations will be conducted through the languages of English and Irish (where required) and all relevant documentation will be published in both languages (where required). The language used in consultation materials will be – as far as possible – highly accessible. 2.11 IFI endeavours to publish revised policy / output documents from the consultation process within 12 weeks of the closing date of consultation.

2.12 In an emergency situation, for example the emergency introduction of a byelaw, IFI may not have the opportunity to undertake or complete a consultation process as outlined in its approach to consultation above.

3.0 Internal approaches to effectively communicate consultations

Activity	Timing	Comments
Database	IFI's master database should be updated approximately one month ahead of the launch of a given consultation.	Key practitioners / stakeholders could be invited to attend the consultation launch.
Consultation document	<p>This should be signed off and approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT) at least one week before the consultation date commences.</p> <p>This will be important for the drafting of press materials.</p> <p>It may also require translation into Irish.</p> <p>In the event that the consultation affects groups with visual / hearing impairments, documents may also require translation to different formats.</p>	